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RUZEHAA/CDR USEUCOM INTEL VAHINGEN GE PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 000433

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SUBJECT: NIGER: HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR RECONCILIATION ON THE
REBELLION

REF: NIAMEY 310

Classified By: Donald W. Koran, CDA, reasons 1.4 (b/d)

11. (C) Summary: The GON official responsible for implementing the 1995 peace accord is disappointed that there had not been any GON follow-up to the MNJ's release of hostages. He thought the President's April 24 speech marking the end of the 1990s rebellion and the Communication Minister's statements during his current trip to Paris might indicate whether the GON is willing to negotiate with the MNJ. The humanitarian situation in the north continues to deteriorate.
End Summary.

12. (C) High Commissioner for Peace Restoration Mohamed Anacko on April 17 provided Charge his assessment of the rebellion. Anacko was the leader of a Tuareg rebel group in the early 1990s, who in his current job is charged with implementing the Peace agreement that ended that rebellion.

13. (C) Anacko was less optimistic than he was in his March 12 meeting with the Ambassador. That meeting followed the MNJ's release of 25 hostages, which Anacko had thought might lead to discussions to end the conflict (reftel). Anacko told the Charge that there had been no GON follow-up to the hostage release. He was pleased, however, with the declaration that the National Assembly issued on April 12 which, among other things, urged the government to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict. He thought the Assembly's action might move the peace process forward.

14. (C) Anacko said his office normally prepares the speech the President gives on the April 24 anniversary of the 1995 peace agreement. The office drafted a conciliatory speech this year, with a call for "extending a hand" to "all the sons of Niger." The speech will be forwarded to the Presidency soon, and then Anacko will learn if the President agrees to use the conciliatory language. Anacko said he is also waiting to see what remarks GON communications minister and spokesman Mohamed Ben Omar makes on his current visit to Paris. If Ben Omar refers to the MNJ as bandits and traffickers, it will indicate a lack of desire on the part of the GON to negotiate with the MNJ.

15. (C) Anacko was concerned about a second hand report that President Tandja was very angry after a meeting he had on April 15 with the released hostages. He apparently summoned his advisors to a meeting immediately after the session with the hostages, but Anacko did not know what was discussed at that meeting or what had made Tandja angry.

¶6. (C) The humanitarian situation in the north continues to deteriorate, Anacko said. The civilian population has fled from three communes: Iferouane early in the rebellion, Gougaram a few weeks ago, and now Dabaga. Dabaga is a rich farming area which grows potatoes and onions, but now the fields are untended. The thousands of civilians who fled Dabaga have taken refuge in Agadez, exacerbating the humanitarian situation there. Food is particularly scarce in Agadez. " (Note: Communes are subsections of states, and are often quite large.)

MINIMIZED CONSIDERED.

KORAN